

Artists Bengtz

# Artists still drawing from teacher's lessons

The late Ture Bengtz's influence lives  
in the art community of Duxbury — and beyond

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**D**UXBURY — Twenty-five years after his death, Ture Bengtz continues to influence the art scene in the south suburbs.

A one-person show in Duxbury's newest art center features work by the man who helped found the Boston Printmakers, designed the Art Complex Museum, served as its first director, and taught many professional artists and art teachers in the region.

"Beyond the Shore," an exhibit of 27 Bengtz paintings, prints, and drawings related to a coastal theme, inaugurates the newly named Lillian and Ture Bengtz Gallery at the Ellison Center for the Arts, home of the Duxbury Art Association and South Shore Conservatory. This exhibit is the first one-person show of the artist's work since the nearby Art Complex Museum exhibited his lithographs shortly after his death in 1973.

"Since the day we hung the show, a lot more people have been coming to see the work by Ture Bengtz," said Craig Bloodgood, a sculptor and curator of the Duxbury Art Association exhibits. Bloodgood's favorites are the abstract pieces, he said, allowing that different visitors gravitate toward different styles in the exhibit.

"He had a wide range," Bloodgood said.

"The thing that this exhibit doesn't show is that mainly he was a teacher."

Some of his students, such as the viewers of "Bengtz on Drawing" on WGBH-TV during the late 1950s, learned the basics of drawing from afar. Others, including his students from the School of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts during the 1940s, '50s, and '60s, learned about the importance of good draftsmanship directly from the master.

Several of those students have been coming to the Bengtz exhibit in Duxbury this summer. They speak of their former teacher with reverence, respect, and fondness.

"He was just wonderful," said Rosalind Farbush of Cohasset, a painter who started to study with Bengtz in 1945 and exhibits her work on Newbury Street and in Mexico.

"In anatomy class, he would dress up the skeleton and make it so much fun," she said, noting the artist's flair for theatrics. "He has made people who can draw. He was responsible for wonderful draftsmanship [of artists today]. . . . You can't be a good painter if you can't draw."

Hazel Olson Brown of Quincy, a former professor of jewelry making at the Museum School, had been a student in Bengtz's drawing and anatomy classes in the late 1940s. Although she taught a three-dimensional medium, she said she encouraged her students to follow in Bengtz's footsteps and develop their

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GLOBE PHOTO / KERRY BRETT

**Lanci Valentine holds a portrait of her father, Ture Bengtz, at a one-man show of his work in a gallery named for him and her mother at Ellison Center for the Arts.**

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drawing skills.

"I work more in the sculptural field," Brown said. "But you need that [drawing] background. Then you can start to create in that third dimension. . . . He could put his pen to the paper and it would just come out the way he wanted. He was so versatile. He could do anything."

"He taught so many people," said artist Virginia Allen of Scituate, retired chairman of the department of critical studies at Massachusetts College of Art. "A lot of people I know and worked with at MassArt were his students."

"He genuinely loved and was interested in his students," said the artist's wife, Lillian, for whom the new gallery is also named.

"They were a team," said Lancel Valentine of her parents and the naming of the Lillian and Ture Bengtz Gallery. Valentine, former

director of South Shore Art Center in Cohasset and development director of South Shore Conservatory, said her mother Lillian was in charge of business matters, allowing her father to focus on his art and teaching.

"My father came to this country thinking he was going to be a musician, a concert violinist, and she [her mother] was a wonderful piano player," Valentine said. "The Ellison Center seemed perfect [for a gallery for them] because it combines the music and the art and it recognized them as a team."

Lillian Bengtz said she still marvels at her husband's seemingly tireless energy and his strong Scandinavian work ethic.

"His nature was to work hard, he wasn't afraid of work," she said. "He spent so much time at his work between teaching and going in the cellar and printing and going in the studio and painting something. He loved it," she said. "He showed me every bit of what he was doing and what he was planning. It was a good life."

Ture Bengtz was born in 1907 on a small Finnish island that was ethnically Swedish. In 1926 he emigrated to the United States, to become a concert violinist. Two years later, at the urging of an uncle, he entered the School of the Museum of Fine Arts and earned a scholarship to study four summers in Europe. After graduation he began a 38-year teaching career at the Museum School. He started the school's first graphics department in 1939. By 1941 he was head of the drawing and graphics department.

Bengt's commitment to graphic arts prompted him to form the Boston Printmakers Association in 1946

with Otis Philbrick and several art students, including the late Carolyn Brenan Harvey. (She incorporated Bengtz's teaching techniques while she served as education coordinator for North River Arts Society in Marshfield.) The printmaking group enjoys a national reputation and regularly exhibits at the Art Complex Museum in Duxbury.

Bengt's involvement with the museum started when he became friends with the Weyerhaeuser family. In 1971 he left teaching to direct the family's new museum. He also designed the Japanese tea house for the museum's tea ceremonies in the summer.

"Ture and Lillian helped," said Charles Weyerhaeuser, the museum's director and a former student of the artist. "Ture laid out pretty much what you see. . . . He was a tremendous help to the family to get the Art Complex established." After the artist's death, Lillian Bengtz became associate director at the museum.

In addition to the Art Complex Museum, Bengtz's work can be found in collections at the Boston Public Library and Addison Gallery of American Art in Andover, among others. The Smithsonian Institution maintains reproductions of his sketchbooks in its Archives of American Art and the Library of Congress has six original pen and ink drawings in its prints and photographs division.

The work in the Duxbury exhibit primarily comes from the Bengtz family's personal collection, said curator Bloodgood.